



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

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OVERVIEW

For a while there, many of us were worried that Tropical Storm Fay might cruise up the coast and interfere with our summertime activities. Luckily it looks like most of that action will remain south of our waters. Despite the lack of tropical weather, the north and east winds since Wednesday have churned up the Bay, bringing small craft advisories and rough seas for those that dare to venture out. Lets all hope that next week allows more of us to get out and fish! Standard summertime fish are biting in most of their usual haunts. Waters near Oyster are loaded with croaker, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel is a hot spot for flounder and other assorted species. Spanish mackerel are keeping anglers busy along Virginia Beach and in the Outer Banks. Offshore, billfish action is picking up, and the seemingly never-ending dolphin action continues.

THE FISHING REPORT

Wachapreague

At Captain Zed's, the 15th Annual Lady's Chick Charter Tournament took place last weekend. The first place winner scored with a 39-pound yellowfin tuna. Other fish included numerous large dolphin up to 25 pounds, and a 43-pound wahoo. Inshore fishing included lots of croaker, numerous flounder, bluefish, spot, and sand mullet.

Onancock

Captain Wil of Onancock reported really nice croaker catches (between 12 and 15 inches). These fish were showing up in depths of 28 to 24 feet along the channels, and squid was the best bait. Flounder were numerous but small last week (in the 15- to 16-inch range). In the creeks, sea mullet and snapper bluefish were available. Very few trout were reported in the area, and crabbing was successful from the local docks.

Cape Charles

Staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle reported several flounder citations. A 9-pound flounder was caught north of Cape Charles, and a 7.5 pounder was caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Anglers were still catching plenty of croaker near Oyster, and Kiptopeke Pier was producing small trout and bluefish in the evenings. Some Spanish mackerel were also caught in the shipping channel in the bay. A few spot were found off of local piers.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

Several citations were reported from Cobb's Marina this week. The hot spot was definitely the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Two flounder (7 pounds, 15 ounces, 27 inches and 10 pounds, 28 inches) were hooked at the 4th island, and a 4-pound, 3-ounce triggerfish was caught at the 3rd island.

At the Sunset Boating Center, staff reported slow fishing overall. Anglers out looking for large flounder have complained about a large number of throwbacks. There was a citation flounder caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel last week, along with a grouper at the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel.

Only one citation was reported from Salt Ponds Marina this week. It was an 11-pound, 4-ounce, 30-inch flounder caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Other catches included additional flounder, spot, croaker, dolphin, and Spanish mackerel.

According to staff at the York River Fishing Center, a lot of action was reported off of the Gloucester Pier. Other fishing included a lot of good-sized spot, croaker, and bluefish. A 7-pound, 7-ounce citation flounder was caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and anglers were catching 2- to 3-pound Spanish mackerel around the York Spit.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

All eyes are looking east. Seventy-five of the mid-Atlantic's top billfish teams have gathered in Virginia Beach to compete in Virginia's premier offshore event, the Virginia Beach Billfish Tournament. The top catch will be white marlin, but big blue marlin are on the minds of everyone. Huge fish from recent tournaments have anglers thinking that this may be the time for a new Virginia record blue marlin. Besides billfish action, a very good dolphin bite continues off of Virginia. Mostly absent this year, some yellowfin tuna have made a showing. A few large wahoo have been caught and really getting some attention; bigeye tuna have made a showing in the Norfolk Canyon. Swordfish are a possible catch for overnights. Offshore bottom fishermen are catching a mixture of nice fish: snowy and yellowedge grouper, wreckfish, blueline and golden tilefish, and even a possible world-record Darwin's slimehead (look that one up). The offshore wrecks like the 44-Fathom Wreck are holding good numbers of large sea bass. Inshore wrecks like the Gulf Hustler and Santore are producing some impressive triggerfish. The state record for triggerfish is open. It will take a 6-pound fish to qualify. This should be the year this fish is caught. Spadefish are swimming over the inshore wrecks. Amberjack continue to swarm around the South Tower. Closer to home, the Chesapeake Light Tower, the Ricks, Hanks, and Gulf Hustler are all good locations to find some reef donkeys. A few large king mackerel are being caught off of Sandbridge. Spanish mackerel fishing is very good along the Virginia Beach oceanfront. Cobia fishing has turned back on. Sight fishing continues to be good, but the chum bite has heated back up. Some really impressive catches have come from the York Spit area. Flounder fishing for large fish has been very good on hard structure in the bay. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge

Tunnel, Cape Henry Wreck, Back River Reef, and the Cell are all producing doormat-sized flounder.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

With water temperatures close to eighty, the flounder action is hit-and-miss, depending on which person you ask. Larger fish are responding for live baiters along the entire span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT). Although the 3rd and 4th islands are usually the hot spots, more and larger fish are now showing around the 1st island of the CBBT. Drifters are finding keepers in the lower bay inlets, the small boat channel at the CBBT, the Baltimore Channel passing near Cape Henry, Buoy 42, and Back River Reef.

Cobia are continuing their late summer trend of favoring buoys and bridge pilings. A smattering of fish cruising along the surface on the ocean front is also contributing to the latest catches. This pattern should only improve over the next several weeks. Cobia chummers are also scoring with some decent fish within bay waters.

Spadefish are swarming around pilings of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, with sheepshead lurking underneath. Most spades are on the smaller side lately. The sheepshead have responded a little better this week, but nothing to indicate a turn around. The trigger fish action is still a go with a few bigger fish starting to show. With no limits on these fish, anglers are loading up on lower bay and coastal wrecks, as well as the CBBT structure.

Spanish mackerel action is still off the charts, with several citations up to 5 pounds registered recently. These fish will chase small Clark and Drone spoons trolled at a quick clip along the ocean front and the Cape Henry tide rips. The good run of king mackerel off Virginia Beach is still going on. The easterly wind direction this week should push in clearer water, and kick the king action up a notch. Fish are falling to mostly trolled live bait, with menhaden the top performer lately. Several smokers up to 30 pounds were boated from Sandbridge to False Cape this week. Trollers are also reporting catches of small mahi in these same areas.

Tarpon are elusive relatives of the bonefish and the ladyfish. These air-gulping wonders will roll and frolic all around your bait, as you roast in the heat without a hit. These fish are still active in the back waters of the Eastern Shore, with Oyster a favorite location.

Red drum are on a late-season roll, with good action through the full moon cycle last week on the Nine Foot Shoal. Black drum are still schooled at the 3rd and 4th islands, with several releases reported.

Count on the big croaker numbers to climb as fall approaches, with some anglers already complaining they are a nuisance. The back waters of Oyster are still providing good hardhead action on squid and shrimp. Spot are also active at the 1st island and the Concrete Ships with plenty of keepers available.

Jack crevelle are lurking around the Chesapeake Light Tower, and big amberjack will take any offering at the South Tower. Be prepared, anglers are sorting through dozens of fish before earning a Virginia state citation, which is common for this time of year.

Offshore, billfish action is spread out, but the action should improve through the month. Blue marlin, white marlin, and a smattering of sails are possibilities. Tuna action can improve, with reports of

scattered yellowfin to 60 pounds and a few bigeye tuna around. Plenty of dolphin, with some big gaffers mixed in, are hanging on pots and weed lines. Wahoo are available in about 30 fathoms of water.

Virginia Middle Bay

The fishing continues to be good in this region of the Bay. Jett's Hardware and Smith Point Marina reports that the spot are reaching good eating size, and there are some grey trout in the mix as well. Bluefish and Spanish mackerel are still being caught in good numbers. Flounder are also available around the jetties and at the mouths of the rivers. According to Garrett's Marina, the action in their neck of the woods includes spot, some croaker, and grey trout.

Capt. Jim Thompson reports some days last week were slow, but those who used a lot of fresh worms did well, and those who used synthetic bait were left swinging in the wind. The main fish targeted was spot. The catches were nice sized but were slow to bite. Bluefish were also very active in the area. The best area was in the Bay off Gwynn's Island for spot, croaker, mullet, shark and bluefish. Cut bait was the best bait for bluefish. In the Piankatank, the hot spots were Buoy number 5 and Cherry Point. In the Rappahannock, it was either up the River past the White Stone Bridge or Butler Hole off Windmill Point Marina. The Spike did not produce this week for some reason. The Spanish mackerel were biting around Windmill Point. Remember this time of year to keep your lines tight as the fish will suck off the bait and you will never feel it being done.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

The first cobia of the season were spotted this week. Two anglers fished the York Spit area and registered two release citations. They kept their first two fish and released their fifth and sixth fish. All were caught on unspecified live bait. More than one fish "tail danced" on being hooked. The first pan-sized keeper grey trout have made a showing in the Piankatank River, biting on bloodworms. Spanish mackerel were available in good numbers in lower Fleets Bay, along the drop off at Windmill Bar. The charter aboard LESS STRESS had 29 keeper Spanish and over 40 keeper bluefish last weekend. Good-sized spot continued to be caught at Cherry Point, off Gwynn's Island in 25 to 30 feet of water, at the Spike (#3 Rappahannock marker), and at Butlers Hole. White perch and croaker were mixed in at the same locations. Flounder fishing improved this week with 4 citation fish. Jigging cut bait and Gulp Jerk Shad was effective as well as jigging live spot. The largest specimen registered on Thursday (11 pounds, 9 ounces) was one of 6 keepers caught jigging strips of squid.

Virginia Beach

At the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, inshore anglers did well with spadefish, taylor bluefish, and numerous Spanish mackerel. In the inlet, numerous bluefish and spot were found, and flounder fishing has been excellent (5 to 10 keepers per day). Offshore, the white marlin bite was phenomenal, and bull and gaffer dolphin action was also hot.

Over the weekend, offshore boats caught blue marlin, white marlin, and sail fish at the 450 line, according to Paula at Fisherman's Wharf Marina. Large numbers of dolphin were also caught. Inshore, little fishing was reported.

Virginia Piers

Numerous large spot were reported at the Lynnhaven Pier this week. Large taylor bluefish and sea mullet were also hooked. Keeper flounder up to 24 inches have also been landed from the pier.

At the Sandbridge Pier, anglers found bluefish, Spanish mackerel, and spot this week.

Outer Banks, NC

Water temperatures in the surf continue to be warm with a range from the upper 70's to lower 80's. It appears that the affects from tropical storm Fay will remain to our south so the fishing conditions should remain good for the next few days.

Offshore fishing out of the Nags Head area continues to be good with dolphin, amberjack, wahoo, and barracuda, as well as a good bite of billfish. Tuna catches continue to be slow with many boats being shut out. The striped bass bite has slowed in the 3 to 6 mile range; however bottom fishermen have been able to find triggerfish and sheepshead on the reefs in these areas. Inshore, the Spanish mackerel bite continues to be good with most boats catching their limit in the near-shore areas. Fishing in the surf and on the piers has also proven successful with Spanish mackerel. Other species of note include spadefish, spot, flounder, and croaker. Those fishing for speckled trout in the sound saw the best action early in the morning, around the Washington Baum Bridge.

The fishing south of Oregon Inlet has been consistent as well with a good bite of Spanish mackerel on north and south of the Point. Bluefish can also be caught by those throwing spoons for Spanish mackerel. Sea mullet are present on the North Beach and some grey trout were being caught around ramp 38.

Offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet produced good yellowfin tuna action, as well as dolphin and scattered wahoo. People fishing inside the sound saw good catches of bluefish, grey trout, and speckled trout.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

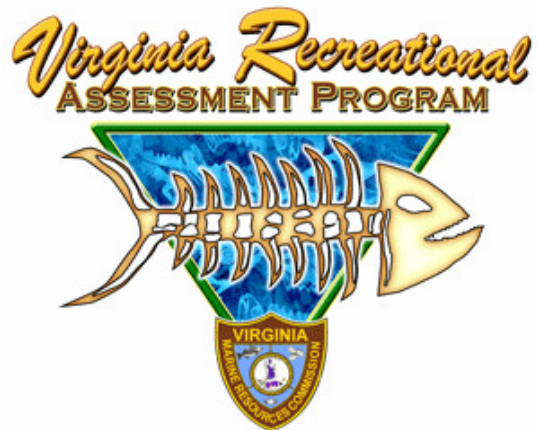
Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

Get Hooked!

Report at

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.












A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The page has a blue header with the commission's name and logo. Below the header, there's a section titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" with a "Welcome Jgrist," message. A prominent message states "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" and explains that they are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. Another section titled "New 2008 Tautog Regs" lists the closed season (May 1 through June 24), minimum size limit (14 inches), and possession limit (4 per person). A statistics box on the left shows data for June 16, 2008: 1,457 members, 295 trips, and 3,941 catches. At the bottom, there are "Related Links" and "Help" sections.

**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
WANTS YOUR FISH....
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You catch it, you fillet it,
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)

Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)

Wachapreague Marina

Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)

Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)

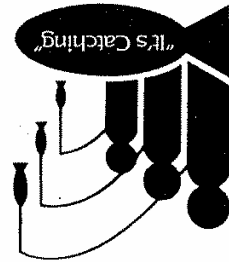
Website: http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm

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